



## Staying vigil

**Photo:** by Sandy Sisti

**Gear:** Taken with a Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon 600mm f4 IS USM lens using a Gitzo tripod and Wimberley head

**Settings:** 1/1600, f6.3, ISO 1000, @600mm

**W**hile visiting Grand Teton National Park, a friend alerted me to the presence of a red fox den.

We arrived at the den the following morning when all was quiet. The adult foxes were out hunting, but we'd occasionally see a tiny kit peer out from the den, expectantly waiting for its parents. We set up our equipment at a respectable distance and waited for the adult foxes to return.

After a few hours, we spotted the male and female fox as they approached. The kits saw them too, and all five ran toward the pair, greeting them excitedly. After a few minutes, the male fox disappeared, but the vixen stayed close. She seemed to enjoy playing with her kits, letting them bite her tail and climb on her as she gently nipped at them.

Finally the vixen nursed her hungry brood. When she was finished, the vixen collapsed in an exhausted heap in front of the den, with her kits still running around playfully. As she was resting, the smallest kit walked over and nuzzled her, licking her muzzle as a request for food. The vixen opened her eyes for a moment and acknowledged her kit with a delicate love bite. Then she went to sleep. After a while, the tired kits returned to their den with the vixen resting just outside the entrance, keeping vigil. I always enjoy photographing wildlife, but when you're able to observe and capture the dynamics between family members, it's truly a humbling experience.

—Sandy Sisti